



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO PERUGIA AND ASSISI

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OTHER
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND ECCLESIAL
COMMUNITIES GATHERED IN ASSISI**

Cathedral of St Rufino

27 October 1986

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Jesus Christ "is our peace who has made us both one,
and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility".*

I WISH TO THANK the Heads and Representatives of other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities who have helped to prepare this Day, and who are present here either personally or through their delegates. It is significant that as the third Christian millennium approaches we Christian people have gathered here in the name of Jesus Christ to call upon the Holy Spirit, and to ask him to fill our universe with love and peace.

1. Our faith teaches us that peace is a gift of God in Jesus Christ, a gift which should express itself in prayer to him who holds the destinies of all peoples in his hands. This is why prayer is an essential part of the effort for peace. What we do today is another link in that chain of prayer for peace woven by individual Christians and by Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities, a movement which in recent years has been growing stronger in many parts of the world. Our common prayer expresses and manifests the peace reigning in our hearts, since as disciples of Christ we have been sent into the world to proclaim and to bring peace, that gift "from God, who, through Christ, reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation". As disciples of Christ we have a special obligation to work to bring his peace to the world.

We are able as Christians to gather on this occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit, who draws the followers of Jesus Christ ever more fully into that participation in the life of the Father and the Son, which is the communion of the Church. The Church is herself called to be the effective sign and means of reconciliation and peace for the human family. Despite the serious issues which still divide us, our present degree of unity in Christ is nevertheless a sign to the world that Jesus Christ is truly the Prince of Peace. In ecumenical initiatives God is opening up to us new possibilities of understanding and of reconciliation, that we may be better instruments of his peace. What we do here today will be less than complete if we go away without a deeper resolution to commit ourselves to continuing the search for full unity and to overcoming the serious divisions which remain. This resolution applies to us as individuals and as communities.

2. Our prayer here in Assisi should include repentance for our failures as Christians to carry out the mission of peace and reconciliation that we have received from Christ and which we have not yet fully accomplished. We pray for the conversion of our hearts and the renewal of our minds, that we may be true peacemakers, bearing a common witness to him whose kingdom is "a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace".

Yes, Jesus Christ is our peace, and he must remain always before our eyes. He is the Crucified and Risen One, the One who greeted his disciples with what has become our common Christian greeting: "Peace be with you". And "when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side".

We must not forget this significant gesture of the Risen Christ. It helps us to understand the way in which we can be peacemakers. For the Risen Lord appeared to his disciples in his glorious state but still bearing the marks of his crucifixion.

In today's world, scarred by the wounds of warfare and division, indeed in a sense crucified, this action of Christ gives us hope and strength. We cannot avoid the harsh realities that mark our existence as a result of sin. But the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst with the marks of crucifixion upon his glorified Body assures us that, through him and in him, this war-torn world can be transformed. We must follow the Spirit of Christ, who sustains us and leads us to heal the world's wounds with the love of Christ that dwells in our hearts.

3. It is this same Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth, whom we ask today to enable us to discern the ways of mutual understanding and forgiveness. But prayer for peace must be followed by appropriate action for peace. It must make our minds more keenly aware, for instance, of those issues of justice which are inseparable from the achievement of peace and which lay claim to our active involvement. It must make us willing to think and act with the humility and love that foster peace. It must make us grow in respect for one another as human beings, as Churches and Ecclesial Communities, ready to live together in this world with people of other religions, with all people of good will.

The way of peace passes in the last analysis through love. Let us implore the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son, to take possession of us with all his power, to enlighten our minds and to fill our hearts with his love.

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